

ègbădô	'Ègbádô (a city)	şùgbõn	'but'
pā	'kill'	gbàgbě	'forget'
ēgbé	'companion'	pọ̀jù	'be abundant'
àpǒtí	'box'	pārí	'finish'

d.	ābó	'metal bowl'
	āgbó	'we heard'
	āpó	'we squeezed'
	ōbā	'king'
	ōgbā	'equal'
	ōpā	'wrath'
	àbòṅ	(type of tree)
	àgbòṅ	'chin'
	àpòṅ	(type of fruit)

e. Sound sequences for practice with a live tutor

pi	pin	pu	pun	ipi	ipin	upu	upun
pe		po		epe		opo	
pẹ		pọ̀	pọ̀ṅ	ẹ̀pẹ̀		ọ̀pọ̀	ọ̀pọ̀ṅ
	pa				apa		

The Tones of Yoruba

In transcribing the pitch phenomena of Yoruba for beginning foreign students of the language, it is expedient to write in terms of six tones: four level ones, and two glides. This is true even though for those to whom Yoruba is the mother tongue,

BASIC COURSE

or for advanced non-Yoruba students, a three-way distinction among high, mid and low is sufficient for all practical purposes.

The tone marks have the following values:

Symbol	Value	Examples								
á	High level pitch	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">fẹ́</td> <td>'to want'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>sílẹ́</td> <td>'to the house'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ṣìṣẹ́</td> <td>'to work'</td> </tr> </table>	fẹ́	'to want'	sílẹ́	'to the house'	ṣìṣẹ́	'to work'		
fẹ́	'to want'									
sílẹ́	'to the house'									
ṣìṣẹ́	'to work'									
ā	Mid level pitch	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">lọ́</td> <td>'go'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>níṣū</td> <td>'with reference to yan'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ṣmọ́</td> <td>'child'</td> </tr> </table>	lọ́	'go'	níṣū	'with reference to yan'	ṣmọ́	'child'		
lọ́	'go'									
níṣū	'with reference to yan'									
ṣmọ́	'child'									
á̇	'Second' tone: level pitch slightly lower than mid level would be in the same tonal en- vironments.	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">láti</td> <td>'from, by, etc.'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ómó kán</td> <td>'one child' (some dialects only)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>mẹ́tá</td> <td>'3'</td> </tr> </table>	láti	'from, by, etc.'	ómó kán	'one child' (some dialects only)	mẹ́tá	'3'		
láti	'from, by, etc.'									
ómó kán	'one child' (some dialects only)									
mẹ́tá	'3'									
à	Low level pitch	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">rà</td> <td>'buy'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ẹ̀yìn</td> <td>'palm nuts'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ní fílà</td> <td>'with ref. to a hat'</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">(some dialects only)</td> </tr> </table>	rà	'buy'	ẹ̀yìn	'palm nuts'	ní fílà	'with ref. to a hat'	(some dialects only)	
rà	'buy'									
ẹ̀yìn	'palm nuts'									
ní fílà	'with ref. to a hat'									
(some dialects only)										
ǎ	Rising pitch. (1) After ' or ~,	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">sílǔ</td> <td>'to the town'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>má wǎ</td> <td>'don't come'</td> </tr> </table>	sílǔ	'to the town'	má wǎ	'don't come'				
sílǔ	'to the town'									
má wǎ	'don't come'									

the rise starts at lowest ɕílê mǎrǔn '5 shillings'
 level and rises part of
 the way toward the highest.

(2) After other tones, the òmò yǐ 'this child'
 rise starts approximately (some dialects only)
 at the middle level and ìlǔ 'town'
 rises to the highest.

In general, the beginning and ending points of the glide vary somewhat with the tonal environment and with the style and tempo of speech.

â Falling pitch. As with lójâ 'to the market'
 the rising glide, begin- mǎfâ '6'
 ning and ending points
 vary somewhat according to the tonal environment and with the style and tempo of speech. Falling pitch is found almost exclusively after ' or ˇ.

The special tone mark * means that for some speakers the syllable has high tone, for others low tone, and for still others falling tone.

The symbol † stands for a high tone at the end of the last syllable that precedes it; this sign is most frequently found after a noun or noun phrase which is the subject of a verb. After †, syllables with basic low tone have falling tone.

Tonal differences among speakers of Yoruba

Depending on the area from which a speaker comes, certain additional tonal phenomena may be noted. Low tone at the beginning of a word e.g. èwù 'garment' òbẹ̀ 'knife' is pronounced by most with low level pitch, but a falling contour may also be heard from some. A mid tone followed directly by rise or second tone is pronounced by most speakers with mid level pitch, but a fall may be heard here also. Finally, the tone of a word in one part of the Western Region may be different from the tone of the same word somewhere else: the word ri 'to see' has high tone for most speakers, but mid tone for others.

Vowel length

What is phonetically a single vowel in Yoruba may occur with one of two contrasting degrees of length. If we use the word 'mora' to stand for a unit of vowel length, then a long vowel has two moras, while a short vowel has only one. In the system of transcription used in this course, two-mora vowels are indicated in three different ways:

(1) When the long vowel results from assimilation of a word-final vowel to the word initial vowel that follows it, the extra mora is indicated by a dot followed by the vowel letter: şé õ lõ ş'õ lõ 'did you go?'

(2) When the long vowel results from the assimilation of a word-initial vowel to the word-final vowel that precedes it, the extra mora is indicated by a dot following the vowel letter: īlé ìwě īlé'wě 'school'

The same symbolism is used for moras that are not pronounced except following another word:

ilé	'house'	bàbǎ	'father'
ilé`mī	'my house'	ilé`bàbǎ	'father's house'

(3) Otherwise, the two-mora vowels are written with double vowel letters:

bèè	'like that'
náá	'the, that'
bóólù	'ball'

It should be noted that as far as pronunciation is concerned, these three manners of writing two-mora vowels are completely equivalent to one another: ɕ'ò l̄, ɕó` l̄ and ɕóò l̄ would all be pronounced identically.

Vowels may also occur in sequence with no intervening consonant, but with a syllable boundary between them. The hyphen is used when an explicit symbol is needed for this juncture.

ó gó`	'he is tired'
ó gó-ò	'you are tired'

In the system of transcription employed here, the space between words has no phonetic value. It is inserted to set off units that have been established on other than phonological grounds, and serves incidentally the orthographic function of distinguishing the sequence (nasal vowel, oral vowel) from the sequence (oral vowel, n, vowel):

àwòn òbì`mī	'my parents'	āwò náà	'the leather'
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'Condensation'

Most frequently, each unit of vowel length in Yoruba carries one and only one of the six tones, and the tone on the second mora is either low, mid, or high. It sometimes happens, however, that a tonal sequence that ordinarily occupies two moras is pronounced with the length of only one. Because in such cases the two-mora pronunciation is usually optional, the name 'condensation' has been applied to this phenomenon. 'Condensed' forms are not ordinarily indicated in this course, but they may be represented graphically by writing the latter of the two tones over a blank space:

Uncondensed:	ē gbé ^ˀ lō sílé	'take him, go home'
Condensed:	ē gbé ^ˀ lō sílé	' " " " " :

The vowel represented by gbé^ˀ consists of two moras, while the vowel represented by gbé^ˀ consists of only one.

Tone Drills

Tone is a difficult but indispensable part of the Yoruba language. It is used not only as a means of differentiating among the members of countless sets of otherwise identical words, but also as an important grammatical signalling device. Anyone who wants to understand Yoruba easily or speak it intelligibly must use tone with at least reasonable accuracy.

For this reason, three series of tone drills have been placed at the beginning of this course. Their length may seem formidable to the beginning student, but it is recommended that from 25 to 50 hours out of the first 100-150 hours of study be devoted to them. Later, the student will find that almost all of the words

and phrases which he has practiced under the guise of tone drills will reappear in the regular numbered units of the course, and the tonal difficulties in the dialogues and exercises of those units will be greatly reduced if they have first been tackled systematically.

Series I. Tone contrasts on one-mora vowels.

If a tape recorder is available, it is suggested that the student listen to each drill a few times before using it with a live instructor. At this stage, he should attempt to give the English responses only.

With a Yoruba-speaking instructor, the drills should be used first for listening practice, then for direct mimicry after the instructor, and finally as a script from which the student reads aloud to the instructor.